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STATE FOR EAP/TC AND NP/NE ALEX BURKART
NRC FOR KEVIN BURKE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/20/2011
TAGS: [ECON](#) [ENRG](#) [KNNP](#) [TW](#)
SUBJECT: NRC ADVISING TAIWAN ON NUCLEAR POWER PLANT LICENSE
EXTENSIONS

REF: TAIPEI 00719

Classified By: DEPUTY DIRECTOR DAVID J. KEEGAN FOR REASONS 1.4 B/D

¶1. C) U.S.Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) licensing experts Kuo Pao-tsin and Kenneth Chang visited Taiwan March 10-20 to advise Taiwan's Atomic Energy Council(AEC) on license renewal procedures for nuclear power plants (NPP). According to Chen Yi-Bin, director of AEC's licensing department, all three NPPs in Taiwan were built before 1985 and are scheduled for license review/renewal. The renewal process will be handled in the order from the oldest to the newest plant. First up for renewal is Jinshan built in 1978. After the Jinshan license is reviewed, Kuosheng and Maanshan need to complete the process.

¶2. (C) Chen said the review process could take up to 4 years to complete and the nuclear power plants need to start the process at least 10-15 years before the end of their design life of 40 years is reached. Once the license is renewed the power plants would be cleared for operation for 20 years beyond their design life, in accordance with U.S. practice. Chen said the license renewal process is legally mandated under Taiwan's nuclear power regulations and AEC has sole authority to approve.

¶3. (C) Kuo Pao-tsin, Deputy Director of the NRC's Division of License renewal told AIT that the staff at AEC had impressive technical credentials but lacked experience in license renewals. Kuo is a veteran of the NRC with long experience in nuclear plant renewals (39 to his credit). Kuo told AIT that this first re-licensing of Taiwan's three nuclear plants will be a challenge for the AEC. He said AEC needs to formulate a plan of action, form teams of experts to handle the technical aspects and finally develop a sound process to carry out the detailed license renewal process. Kuo added that every time AEC sends experts for training in the U.S. he tries to include a session on plant licensing in their program.

¶4. (C) Comment. Renewing nuclear plant licenses in Taiwan is a politically sensitive exercise. One of the basic policies of the ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) is to pursue a "nuclear free homeland". When the the DPP came to power in 2000, it started a campaign to cease construction of Taiwan's fourth nuclear power plant and to decommission the three operating plants earlier than their planned operational lives. By 2006, Taiwan has apparently shifted to committing itself to completing the 4th NPP and is now undertaking a licensing process to put itself in a position to extend the operating life of its old plants. Increasing energy prices

and a desire to reduce greenhouse gas emissions have contributed to Taiwan's change of heart, but the nuclear power industry will likely face further obstacles in the future. End comment
YOUNG